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Georgia Southern University Athletics



PREVIEW: GS Softball Hosts Bash In The Boro

Team welcomes in four other schools to open the 2019 season at upgraded Eagle Field

Softball

Posted: 2/7/2019 3:30:00 PM

STATESBORO - The Georgia Southern softball squad opens up the 2019 season on Friday through Sunday, hosting the 2019 Bash in the Boro Tournament at newly renovated Eagle Field in Statesboro.

Four teams join the Eagles in opening up the 2019 campaign for three days and 13 total games, beginning on Friday at 9 a.m. with Savannah State and Winthrop. Georgia Southern will get its first action of the tournament at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, taking on UT Martin. [Click here for a complete schedule, including links to live stats and live video, of the 2019 Bash in the Boro.](#)

Georgia Southern enters the 2019 season riding high with a successful first season under head coach [Kim Dean](#) under the team's belt. The Eagles went 28-25 overall, tied a school record for the most home runs in a season with 48, and also notched the school's first road win over a nationally-ranked team with a 3-2 victory at No. 22 Louisiana.

The team has seven returning starters from last season's squad, including second-team All-Sun Belt and third-team NFCA All-South Region third baseman [Hannah Farrell](#) (.327, 9 HR, 21 RBI) and second-team All-Sun Belt outfielder [Mekhia Freeman](#) (.331, 2 HR, 26 RBI).

Saint Francis (Pa.) travels the furthest to Statesboro to participate in the Bash in the Boro, and the Red Flash do so under first-year head coach Jessica O'Donnell. O'Donnell replaces head coach Jennifer Patrick-Swift, who took the NC State job after leading Saint Francis (Pa.) to back-to-back Northeast Conference titles.

O'Donnell has plenty of talent returning for the Red Flash, especially reigning NEC Player of the Year Cheyenne McKee (.344, 8 HR, 34 RBI) and senior Haley Norton (.301, 15 HR, 50 RBI), who is fourth on the NCAA's active career leaderboard in home runs with 41. Saint Francis (Pa.) was picked third in the NEC Preseason Coaches' Poll for 2019.

The shortest trip to Statesboro belongs to Savannah State, who is competing in its final season of NCAA Division I competition before the school returns to NCAA Division II and the SIAC. The Tigers are led by seventh-year head coach Jose Gonzalez, who led the team to a 14-23 overall record in 2018, but an 8-7 mark in the MEAC.

The Tigers are led offensively by senior third baseman Cortni Jones (.398, 9 HR, 32 RBI) and in the circle by sophomore Tanisha Williams (4-4, 2.56 ERA). Jones was a second-team All-MEAC selection as a junior.

UT Martin has the longest-tenured coach in the field in Donley Canary, who begins his 18th season at the helm of the Skyhawks in 2019. Canary and the Skyhawks have won two Ohio Valley Conference regular season and tournament championships during his tenure and he has amassed 552 career wins in 17 seasons, ranking him fourth among all-time OVC softball coaches in wins.

The Skyhawks return just two starters from last season's squad that went 25-32 overall and 9-13 in the OVC. Senior shortstop Alli Fulcher (.293, 5 HR, 23 RBI) and senior first baseman Gracyn McBride (.241, 5 HR, 20 RBI) are those two returning starters, while the leading returning hurler for UT Martin is junior Hannah Ridolfi (9-18, 2.48 ERA).

The final team in the tournament field boasts, like Saint Francis (Pa.), a new head coach as Winthrop comes to Statesboro to open up the Windy Thees era. Thees takes over the Eagles after serving as the associate head coach at Utah State, but has previous head coaching stops at Ole Miss and Georgia College & State University.

Winthrop went 17-32 overall and 7-14 in the Big South Conference in 2018, but returns its eight top hitters and the entire pitching staff from a season ago. All-Big South Conference selections Ashley Westbrooks (.340, 6 HR, 26 RBI), Ansley Gilreath (.265, 10 HR, 27 RBI) and Kiley Majette (10-17, 3.17 ERA). The team has been picked to finish seventh in a preseason vote of Big South coaches for 2019.

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